



Listen, hear - Poverty close to home *by Niall Cooper*

We are all concerned about the plight of people in poverty in developing countries. Many of us have been active supporters of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, working for the cancellation of unjust and unpayable international debt. But what about the reality of poverty much closer to home?

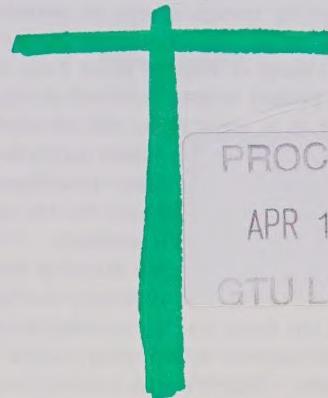
People living in poverty face many barriers when trying to get by with the ordinary business of daily life. Not enough money. Not enough information. Not enough confidence. The list goes on. But that's not the main problem. The main problem is that too often people experiencing poverty do not feel respected. Too often they are not respected. Instead they are labelled 'lazy', 'workshy', 'disruptive' and worse – seen as 'problems' rather than human beings. Too often they are denied what most of us take for granted – simple courtesy, dignity, respect and the basic ability to exercise choice over many of the things that affect their daily lives.

Take Moira's story:

I had two children and no maintenance from my ex-husband. I had no family to support me and was totally financially dependent on social security. When my giro didn't arrive I started to panic as we had no electricity left, no gas or coal for heating and very little food. I went to the local DSS office and was told my giro was in the post. When it didn't arrive the next day I went back – and this was repeated every day for a fortnight. I became

increasingly desperate and angry and, on one occasion, clearly heard one of the staff say, 'Here comes that bloody woman again.' By the third week, and two days before Christmas, I had to borrow money for food and gas stamps. I put a match to the oven and was met by a ball of flame which burnt my face and hair – I must have turned on the power earlier and forgot to light it. I could have been killed. I ended up in A&E suffering from burns and shock. This would not have happened had I not been out of my mind with worry. I told a friend and he took me down to the main DSS office, where I went in all guns blazing demanding to see the manager and refusing to leave until I had my giro. Ten minutes later I had my giro – it had been on someone's desk all the time!

Moira's story – of powerlessness, frustration and anger in the face of an impersonal bureaucracy that can treat her with such apparent disrespect – is not an isolated one. In spite of the unparalleled wealth that we 'enjoy' as a nation, the daily reality of poverty continues to blight the lives of millions. One in three children live in households officially



Right and Wrong

Poverty, sexuality and pastoral work – all areas which raise thorny ethical questions about how we treat each other.

Our authors reflect on these areas in the light of their experience, and suggest ways in which we may do the right thing.

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classified to be in poverty. Over 10.5 million suffer from financial insecurity. One in seven of the population are too poor to be able to engage in two or more common social activities considered necessary by the rest of society: visiting friends and family, attending weddings and funerals or having celebrations on special occasions.

A simplistic view of poverty is that it means not having enough money to provide the basics for life. However, in the words of the 1985 Church of England report *Faith in the City*, 'Poverty is not only about shortage of money. It is about rights and relationships; about how people are treated and how they regard themselves; about powerlessness, exclusion and loss of dignity. Yet the lack of an adequate income is at its heart.'

In the work that Church Action on Poverty has done with people in poverty over recent years, one theme which consistently crops up is the way in which poor people feel 'invisible.' People's own direct experiences of poverty, and their own attitudes and ideas about what can be done to tackle it, are held to be of no value whatsoever.

*We all lose out when people living in poverty don't participate.
Participation will only work if it involves everyone ...
It must make a difference.*

'What is poverty? Poverty is a battle of invisibility, a lack of resources, exclusion, powerlessness . . . being blamed for society's problems.' This finding was echoed by the report of *The Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Participation and Power*, published in December 2000. The Commission's report, *Listen Hear*, documents how, far too often, people experiencing poverty are not treated with respect, either in general or by the people they come into contact with most. They are often seen as 'lazy or shiftless, or scroungers who won't get a job', as one of the Commissioners put it.

The Bishop of Stepney, John Sentamu, a member of the Commission, observed that: 'We found a stark divide between decision makers and the people they claim to represent. This government says it wants to tackle the root causes of poverty, not relieve the symptoms. Our evidence shows that at the root of poverty is powerlessness. Genuine participation is a human right and, if things are to change, people living in poverty must have a real voice in the decisions that affect their lives.'

The report highlights the anger and frustration of those experiencing poverty who believe their voices are not being heard. The

evidence gathered by the Commission revealed the stark division between the people who make the decisions – politicians, civil servants, local councils – and the people they claim to represent.

'We want our voices heard ...

We are more than just a postcode ...

Listen to our views.'

Young people, Scotland, part of Voices for Change project

But lest we become too morally righteous about the mote in others' eyes, the Churches must beware the possible plank in our own. Churches can be rightly proud of our long-standing commitment to addressing the needs of people suffering from poverty, homelessness, unemployment and distress within (and without) our own communities. But how many of our church projects and church-linked charities are run with the active participation of those whom they seek to serve? A national survey of day centres in the early 1990s found that many church projects continue to offer services, to a predominantly white and male clientele, rooted in a passive and philanthropic attitude that 'homeless people were the passive recipients of hand-outs from urban missionaries.'

Can we yet claim that we are an empowering church? In an interesting reversal of the usual direction of 'exchange visits', two homelessness activists from Sao Paulo (Brazil) spent a fortnight visiting church homelessness projects in London a few summers ago. What they found was that, unlike in Sao Paulo, the churches in the UK, with a few notable exceptions, tended to see homeless people as recipients rather than as active partners. One of the visitors, Maria Antonieta da Costa Viera, observed that, 'the Christian commitment would be to assume the prophetic mission of announcing a new way of life and accepting the goal of participation in the transformation of an unjust world into a friendly community.'

We all lose out when people living in poverty don't participate. Participation will only work if it involves everyone. It must involve a change in attitudes and behaviour by politicians, professionals and us all. It must make a difference. And unless that happens, both our own efforts, and wider Government policies to tackle poverty and revitalise our society, will not succeed.

Church Action on Poverty is committed to making real what Bishop David Sheppard famously called God's 'bias to the poor'. We work with churches and local groups across the UK to find ways of ensuring that the voices of those in poverty are heard, and their hopes, ideas and aspirations for change are acted upon, both locally and nationally. Will you come and join us? *f*

*Free summaries of Listen Hear and further information about how you can join Church Action on Poverty are available from:
Wyn Goggins, CAP, Central Buildings,
Oldham Street, Manchester, M1 1JT;
(0161) 236 9321; and on CAP's website at:
www.church-poverty.org.uk/*

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Ethics of vulnerability

by Robert Easton

'Candidates,' the invigilator barked, **'you have three hours. You may turn over your examination paper now.'** Seven months on and I still shudder when I remember the first moments of looking at the questions of that first Ethics paper for my theology degree at Oxford. Where was the question on utilitarianism that I had revised for in such detail? Where was the question on Old Testament ethics? Instead they wanted to know whether it was always good to follow one's conscience, and if the adage 'all you need is love' was true. 'Is there such a thing as a just wage?', asked one question. 'Is there such a thing as a just Ethics exam?' I screamed inside.

As someone who took Latin and Greek at 'A' Level, I am all too aware of the value of studies that may not appear to have a direct, vocational application. And although I am grateful for the ethics teaching I received while at college, I am finding that the ethical teaching I was given during a summer placement away from Oxford is having a more immediate and more profound impact on how I understand and conduct my ministry.

For some twenty years, I have volunteered at agencies catering to people with learning disabilities. It all started when I spent the first of many summers working in American camps for 'mentally retarded' children (as they were then labelled). There, I was put in charge of a non-verbal teenager called Phil who, most of the time, was bouncy, energetic and naughty (his *pièce de résistance* being to pull his trousers down in public, particularly when dignitaries were visiting).

But there was another side to Phil – a dark, agonised side – that found expression particularly at night, when he would scream tortured screams and thrash about wildly while I tried to soothe and comfort him. I was deeply affected by the rawness and intimacy of our summer-long relationship, and although intangible, I am sure our inter-dependence helped me become aware of my utter need of God, and of a deep, gut-based desire to serve God, possibly in some professional capacity. Well, two decades on, and here I am, the dew of ordination still on my cheeks, embarking on my professional clerical career.

I've continued to work with people with learning disabilities, most recently during my studies at Oxford as an assistant at a L'Arche community in Inverness. Started by Jean Vanier in France in the 1960s, there are now dozens of L'Arche communities around the globe – communities that are founded on the Beatitudes, and dedicated to shared living with the poorest and most vulnerable people in society.

For two months, I lived alongside a group of core-members: working with them in their workshops, worshipping with them in their chapel, sharing in their joys and struggles.

And as I make the first tentative steps in my new profession, I am aware that my understanding of ministry is indelibly informed by an 'ethic of L'Arche.' Three aspects of this L'Arche ethic that seem particularly pertinent to my current situation are those of status, efficiency and hospitality.

Status

At L'Arche, status is for the birds. No-one is particularly impressed or interested by what you are or what you do when not at the community. Academic achievements, financial 'success', or positions of authority in society, are of little consequence. It's here and now that matters. Jean Vanier has stated that 'Power is the greatest seduction, and the only answer is to be powerless.' On the face of it, just being with a L'Arche core-member might seem to be of such little consequence, but as Vanier reminds us, 'To be with the poor is our greatest strength ... it's through the littleness that the power of God is manifest.'

As I stroll around the parish in my new clerical outfit, acknowledging the nods of recognition from local people, I am acutely aware that I am here to serve, and not to expect respect. L'Arche has impressed upon me the need to confer dignity equally upon everyone, and that of far greater import than what I wear is who I am now, and what I do now, and how I do it.

Efficiency

The pressure upon clergy, as upon most professionals, to be efficient is considerable. There are just so many people to visit, so many sermons to write, so many projects to tackle, so many discussions and meetings to attend. At college, we learned about clergy stress and burn-out and how to avoid them. Despite that, I recognise that I have already fallen prey to a self-imposed work ethic that puts too many demands on my time, and prevents me from spending enough time with my family and in prayer or study. My diary may be full, but is that necessarily a good thing?

At L'Arche Inverness, there was always something going on. Amidst all the activity,

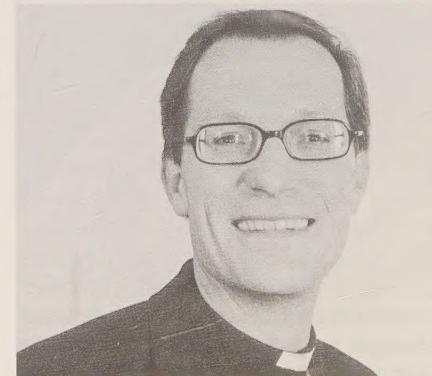
however, we were not only encouraged to spend time helping and nurturing each other but also to give ourselves the chance to catch our breath and regain our energies. Such time and space to cater to our own and each other's needs is not a privilege, but a necessity. I am conscious how easy it is to sacrifice that necessity on the altar of efficiency. L'Arche communities teach us to manage time and not to allow time to manage us.

Hospitality

In his work *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen describes hospitality as a central attitude of any minister who 'wants to make their own wounded condition available to others as a source of healing. A minister,' Nouwen continues, 'is not a doctor whose primary task is to take away pain. Rather, a minister deepens the pain to a level where it can be shared.'

L'Arche communities, and especially their core-members, are hospitality experts. Assistants come and go, sometimes at an alarming rate, yet all are made so welcome, however long they stay. L'Arche, however, is also a place where pain as well as friendship is shared. And this sharing of pain, Nouwen reminds us, 'is no longer paralyzing but mobilizing, when understood as a way to liberation, when we understand that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life.' I want to carry that spirit of hospitality into my ministry, however it unfolds. I want to develop a ministry that risks being vulnerable to enable those very pains to be 'transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope.'

The Anglican priest Ian Cohen has written of the 'priestly vocation' of people with learning disabilities. Using the biblical theme of 'resident alien' he suggests their vocation is to 'embody the soul of the stranger, so imaging God. Thus relationship with anyone who has [learning] disabilities enhances our relationship with God.' From the teachings of Phil in America, all those years ago, to my friends at L'Arche Inverness, I recognise how people with learning disabilities have ministered to me, and have given me strength, resolve and purpose as my priestly vocation unfolds. I recognise how they encapsulate that paradox to which Saint Paul so often refers in his letters: that somehow, God's power is fulfilled and made complete in inability. *f*



Robert Easton is the curate at Saint Mary's Church, Stoke Newington, in London.



Loving with Christ's love

by Gregory SSF

In their pastoral work brothers and sisters are helped by Guidelines for Pastoral Care, produced and authorised by the community. In the light of his ministry in this area, Brother Gregory reflects on some elements of the Guidelines.

As *The Principles of the First Order* remind us, we are set apart to show the love of God and to reflect Christ-like attitudes and responses.

Our Principles (Day 9) encourage us to develop a warm sympathy with the interests and needs of others ... but *There is a risk that our concern and affection ... can be misinterpreted. Care should always be taken about the effects of our ministry upon others ...*

Saint Francis said, 'Preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words!' We are to preach the word simply by being. For some who come to see us we are perhaps the only face of the Church that they will meet at close range. How they encounter us and, in us, God, will depend to a great degree on how we present ourselves. Body language, facial expression, custody of the eyes and hands, touch – all send messages before we begin to listen, let alone speak.

Am I aware of the messages that I'm giving? Do they make me comfortable to be with, and trustworthy? Does the habit I wear 'fit' me? Am I fit to wear the habit as a tool for witnessing to the kingdom, as an ambassador for the Church and SSF?

Our Lord says 'of those who have been given much, much will be expected'; expected not only by the community but increasingly by those who seek us out because God has inspired and encouraged them to share their story with a stranger.

Our mistakes and successes earn a reputation not just for individuals but for the community and the Church. The regrettable court actions we read about in the press record the mistakes and irresponsibilities of religious and priests



Brother Gregory SSF has been Guardian of Alnmouth Friary for the last nine years, the maximum-permitted term of duty. He expects to return to live at Glasshampton in the autumn.

in the past.

Too many people, vulnerable people, have had their lives marred by inappropriate responses or actions. Wearing a habit just does not qualify us to be irresponsible. We are accountable to those who come to us for help and to each other.

This ministry is central to our life (Principles, Day 23). It also places us in a position of great trust, which it is important to honour ...

We are recipients of great trust. We are to exhibit the simplicity of our vocation as Brothers and Sisters to be a vehicle of comfort. Encouraging people to unburden themselves of that which imprisons, threatens and dis-eases.

The words *Pax et Bonum* (peace and good) which we put on our note paper, hang on our doorposts, and use to sign letters, should remind us and those who sense our charism that we are meant to be worthy of our vocation: that our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are a gift to God, the Church and the world.

There should be clear boundaries of space and time and manner ... There is a proper enclosure which is a sign of our celibate vocation.

We are there for people to befriend. Befriending, in my experience as a friar, has its limitations: holy limitations, boundaries which keep us free to respond generously whilst remaining responsible to those who come to us, and to the teachings of the Gospel.

An over-zealous or over-developed and misplaced compassion exposes the unacceptable face of ministry. We want to give no sense of false security. We must avoid lulling the unsuspecting into the sticky web of our own hidden agendas. But we are called to embrace those who come to us for counsel. It is to be done by words and actions which reveal the hidden beauty of Christ borne in our hearts and nurtured in others by our ministry and mission.

In the Gospels and in our holy Father Saint Francis we have examples of compassion showing love with integrity through the beauty of a celibate response.

... we should have an understanding about whose needs are being met in any form of ministry.

Jesus and Saint Francis could give themselves so generously because they demanded nothing in return but that love which is 'the inspiration of service and the reward of sacrifice' (*Principles, Day 13*).

The sacrificial loving which is part of celibacy leads us to see the Christ hidden in each person. Hence we reverence each person as holy, and this reverence for the holy begets wholeness.

Despite our broken, bruised, hurt selves, with the limitations of our sexuality, God calls us beyond self-gratification to see with the eyes and heart of the wounded and the scared. Many of us carry the hidden stigmata of Francis which may cause pain when exposed to the physical beauty and attractive personality of another.

We would ask that brothers and sisters take these Guidelines very seriously, that our ministry may be responsible and effective, as well as caring and loving, in the spirit of Christ.

As well as the Guidelines, we have the Gospel, with all its wisdom on which to reflect. Unlike the Guidelines, which we are encouraged to refer to 'from time to time', the Gospels are a daily experience. Francis, who shaped his entire life on the Gospels, with great dignity and reverence won the hearts and minds of many. His reputation for wisdom and compassion was earned by a life devoted and consecrated to God in Jesus. We too as Christians are consecrated at our baptism.

Around and through the eucharist we can find inspiration for our action from the words and the offering of God. God gives so that we may serve and continue to be there for others.

The peace which Jesus brought to the frightened disciples is ours to share. We are commissioned at the end of every eucharist to 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord', to which I hope we can all give our affirming 'Amen!' in word and action. *f*

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Faithfulness and Responsibility

Towards a theology of human sexuality

by Ian Thompson

Debate about sex and sexuality is not easy – especially within the Church. It involves trying to bring together people who have different, sometimes diametrically opposed, viewpoints on the questions concerned. Deeply-held convictions and cherished traditions are never easily surrendered – nor should they be – but neither should they be allowed to stifle open and honest debate. Such debate, to quote Kenneth Leech, should be conducted ‘in a spirit free from panic, overheated rhetoric, and the crusading mind.’

I was travelling home to Aberdeen by train once when a young Chinese student, around eighteen or nineteen years old, asked if he might sit opposite me. After a while he began to ask questions about being a ‘chaplain’, the Church and the Christian Faith in general. He told me a little about himself, his home background in Hong Kong and his girlfriend, whom he was going to visit in Aberdeen. As we approached Aberdeen station, he asked if he might put one further question to me and, having received my agreement, asked if he and his girlfriend would be allowed to make love during the weekend.

its historical context and apply to our contemporary situation. This claim is, at the very least, open to debate.

Peter Harvey (a former monk of Downside Abbey and lecturer at The Queen’s College, Birmingham) has argued ‘to make [the Bible] into a self-consistent and comprehensive guide to sexual behaviour is to distort it.’ Furthermore, it can be strongly argued that, when we turn our attention to the question of gay and lesbian sexuality and sexual behaviour – especially as expressed within committed, monogamous relationships – ‘neither the Hebrew nor the Christian scriptures are of much help to us.’ This fact has been acknowledged by a wide range of scholars on both sides of the debate. James Hanigan, an American Roman Catholic theologian, with a certain sense of reluctance, concludes that ‘... it is an unwarranted assumption that the biblical authors, had they the knowledge about the nature and variety of homosexuality we have today, would wish to condemn without qualification all homosexual acts and relationships.’ While the Scriptures, then, yield at most a strong presumptive bias against homosexual acts, the texts alone, as we must read them today, do not settle the issue of the morality of homosexual behaviour and relationships beyond all question. One is forced to agree that ‘biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today’s debate.’

Turning from scripture to tradition, the most perfunctory glance through the history of the Church reveals, as Harvey points out, ‘There is not, and never has been, a Christian consensus on moral matters.’ Claiming that there is prevents healthy debate. What is more, should such a highly-systematised, rigorous morality exist, it would – in all probability – Harvey argues, be more a morality or ‘ethics of boundaries rather than of transformation.’

The Lambeth Conference document states that ‘all human relationships need the transforming power of Christ which is available to all, and particularly when we fall short of biblical norms.’ What exactly those ‘biblical norms’ are is, as I have suggested, open to debate but what is beyond doubt, Harvey contends, is that the Church has failed to proclaim a Gospel of transformation that

‘transcends anxieties endemic in the story of humanity and sex.’

Let me offer a tentative suggestion as to how we might move forward in this difficult and complex field. In doing so I must acknowledge my debt to Professor Iain Torrance of Aberdeen University, and, through him, to Peter Harvey.

I want to go back a stage or two to the

*‘There is not,
and never has been,
a Christian consensus
on moral matters’*

Peter Harvey

incident with the young man on the train from Dundee. You will recall that he asked me if it was alright for him to have sexual intercourse with his girlfriend. In other words he was asking, ‘Am I allowed to do this?’ It would be true to say that in the field of Christian sexual ethics this is the question that we most frequently ask. The issue of permissibility lies at the root of nearly all our discussions of moral matters. Peter Harvey suggests that, rather than asking ‘What is allowed?’, the Christian community might do better to ask questions which have more to do with faithfulness than permissibility. Our dominant concern would then become ‘What is faithful to the narrative of this community (the story of Jesus)?’ and would lead us to ask questions like ‘Where is faithfulness happening?’, ‘What patterns of faithfulness can we see proceeding in our world’ and ‘What shapes is faithfulness taking’. These questions beg the further question, ‘What does such faithfulness involve?’

Harvey’s response to that question is to suggest that such faithfulness would involve a morality based on the theological virtues of faith, hope and love rather than a morality dictated by universal principles and imperatives. He points out that the theological virtues, unlike the classical virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and patience, are gifts which are not acquired by education nor are they tied into a morality of principles or values. They are linked with the Jesus story, which is not a ‘moral tale’. However, a morality freed from universal laws (which provide an answer to the question ‘Am I allowed to?’ rather than ‘Am I being faithful to the story?’) would fail to meet demands for a morality which is either ‘an instrument of social control’ or ‘a security mechanism’. What it would do though would be to open up the way for the Church to work

Continued on page 12

*Asking the question
‘Where is faithfulness
happening?’ rather
than ‘Is this allowed?’
may enable the
Church to develop a
new theology of sex
and sexuality.*

I have to say that I was not surprised by the question nor by the fact that, helped by the cloak of anonymity, the young man should put it to me, for it is one that I have been asked many times by sincere, Christian young people. For me, it is yet a further indicator of the need for a clear theology or ethic of sexuality within the Church. I recognise that, for some, the answer to the young man’s question ‘Am I allowed to have sex?’ would be a straightforward ‘No’ and, were the question to have been put by a gay or lesbian young person, the answer would be an even more emphatic ‘No!’. Answers like this are often given on what is claimed to be the clear and irrefutable authority of the scriptures. The implication is that the Bible contains clear-cut teaching on human sexuality that we can lift directly from

Mary
to
Elizabeth

*With dawn, the waking word ...
I shall not strive to tell you how it was.*

*You have long known the manner of his coming;
You taught me from the first to search the shadows
For his unmasking, and to hear full silence,
Intent upon a whisper I might hold
Deep-hidden in a quiet heart, and ponder;
You grieved with me for meeting disappointment,
When unawaited angels passed unwelcome,
Because not blazoned with celestial gold.*

*Insistent claimants covetous of wonders,
Unversed in wonder, rend the speaking stillness;
Only to you I can unveil the glory,
Because I have no words, and you need none.
The child in you salutes my child's oblation;
In my obscurity your simple vision
Perceives me overshadowed by the Godhead,
Dim tabernacle for my radiant Son.*

*You who have waited year on year unwearied,
Walking in faith the way of God's commandments,
Building your patient heart into an altar
In case the Lord should send down fire
from heaven -
You of all women have no mind to question,
After the purging of your immolation,
Why the unequalled terror of this treasure
To me, untried, not then to you, is given.*

*Our God has done what pleased him,
and your spirit
Acclaims with mine the comprehending mercy.
How should you look with envy at my blessing,
Exultant in thanksgiving for your own?
My choice defrauds no other of her choosing;
Out of the shining mystery that wraps us
Shall call to each her glad annunciation,
Whose secret Fiat must be hers alone.*

*Blessed are they who bear the word
and keep it!*

*Behold, in all the ages of the world,
The handmaids of the Lord.*

Rosemary CHN

Compton Durville 2001

Quiet Days

26 May - Sue CSF;
4 August - Chris James CSF; 13 October - Phyllis CSF;
1 December - Jackie CSF
All from 10am - 4pm; bring packed lunch, drinks supplied.
Suggested contribution - £10

*

Open Day

Open Afternoon - Saturday 30th June, 2.30 - 5.30pm

*

Working Days

The sisters at Compton Durville welcome women and men as working guests. Come and share in our life for up to a fortnight, helping with the practical work of the house and garden. Help is particularly appreciated in the summer, but is sometimes needed at other times of the year too.

*

For more information about any of these events, please contact

Saint Francis Convent, Compton Durville, South Petherton, Somerset TA1 5ES
Tel: 01460 240473 Fax: 01460 242360 email: csf.compton@talk21.com

Hilfield Friary 2001

'Secret Garden' Open, 10 - 13 May
Companions' Day, Saturday 16 June
Summer Festival, Saturday 23 June
Stigmata Festival, Saturday 22 September
Pre-Advent Quiet Day, Saturday 1 December

*

For more information about any of these events, please contact

The Friary Secretary, Hilfield, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE

Tel: 01300 341345 Fax: 01300 341293 email: ssf@hilfielduk.freescrve.co.uk

The brothers at Glasshampton

are again looking for men and women who would like to join them over the summer as
working guests.

From July to the end of September, the brothers would welcome any who can come for up to a fortnight to share in the life of the Monastery whilst at the same time giving a hand with the running of the house and garden.

Contact: The Guardian, Saint Mary-at-the-Cross, Glasshampton, SHRAWLEY, Worcester WR6 6TQ

Minister's Letter

Brother Damian SSF,
Minister Provincial of the European Province
Brothers, writes:

A phrase and a question have been persistently invading my mind as I have pondered the subject of this letter. They are simply: 'What an immense opportunity is given to Franciscans.' 'How do we use it today?'

Francis was a man of passion, and that passion, once directed away from his earlier pursuits into war, was re-directed towards the discovery of straightforward Gospel values. He began to light up situations of reconciliation, or identify where creation became community, and the Cross of Christ was recognised as central to everything.

In today's world we think we have made remarkable progress – and we have. But as every scientist knows, one answer poses half-a-dozen new questions, and one discovery poses six new areas of research. Science today is so swift returns answers that we hardly have time to understand, reflect, evaluate and respond before another wave of discoveries is deposited awkwardly into our (usually Western) laps.

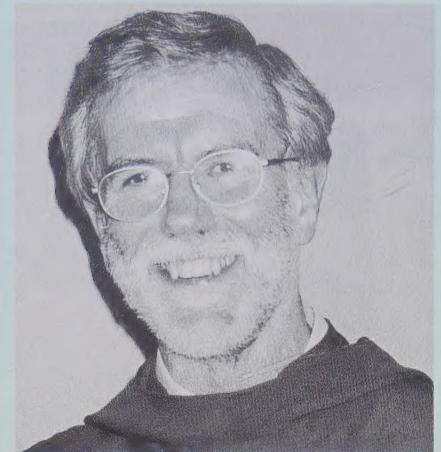
Franciscans inherit a basic wisdom from our Patron, along with patterns of thought and response that he generated. Perhaps I may give three examples upon which we as Franciscan-minded people might wish to focus right now.

Medicines are researched and marketed by mega-companies whose achievements are bringing relief and cure or a recovery of life to millions. The words of Ecclesiastes 38 spring to mind: 'The Lord has created medicines from the earth ... there is no end to the works of the Lord, who spreads health over the whole world.' Not quite! While last year the four largest pharmaceutical companies made profits of over \$20bn, and people with HIV are having the quality of their lives

transformed, such drugs are only bringing health and vitality to sufferers in that part of the world which can afford it. If Franciscans believe in fraternity, we must do something on behalf of nearly half the world's population who will die before they have achieved anything like a full life, for that cannot be right. The problem is a complex one but we dare not just sit idly by.

Weapons are probably the most popular single item among the world's luxury trade. Weapons have a single purpose. As deterrents they only work up to a point. Francis changed his mind about engaging in war. He recognised that Jesus taught a more subtle, non-violent action towards enemies. He actually said we are to love them! In the long history of the world, it seems that it has only been in the last ten years that we have begun to witness some amazing results of non-aggressive, non-violent campaigns which have achieved peace. After the 'velvet revolution' in Czechoslovakia came the silent fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the ending of Apartheid in South Africa in 1993; and suddenly Milosovic has gone (2000). 'Lord, make us instruments of your peace' is probably the best known of prayers, after the prayer Jesus himself gave us. It is written in a quite unusual style, for we pray that the action may be through us: 'where there is injury, let us bring pardon'. The answer to our prayer is effected in ourselves. And there is no better way of defeating an enemy than by making him/her a friend, or if not a friend, at least no longer a threat.

My third target for a direct Franciscan response is in the area of ecology. In this matter it is not the Churches that are the most active, nor indeed the mature, responsible,



educated Westerner. But it is clearly from children, in schools, from the minds of young people across the globe. We are acting pretty dumb about the causes of global warming. We are deaf to the predictions about serious land loss for the people of Pakistan or the Maldives Islands. I go on driving, so do the lorry-drivers and pilots, as we merrily discharge carbon monoxide from our intensely-industrialised and socially-mobile culture. 'Greenhouse gases' must be reduced by over sixty percent, and yet we can't even agree on cutting it by five percent! What in heaven's name are we playing at?

Franciscans do recognise the need to change our way of living, our attitudes to spending, our power over others. Do we double our efforts, or are we just about to rise up, shout aloud, undertake another non-violent, velvet turnaround? What an opportunity is ours! Together we must find the way to use it. I have prepared a second 'letter' which I will gladly send you on request, e-mail (damianssf@aol.com) or ordinary mail.

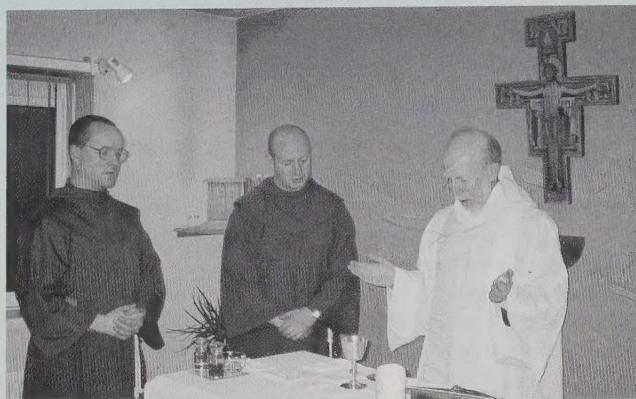
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damian SSF". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Damian" being the larger portion and "SSF" appearing to be initials underneath.

Theme Prayer

Lord God,
our protector and guide,
who made us knowing both good and evil:
receive our prayer
and, by your wisdom,
help us to discern and desire all that is good,
that the offering of our lives
may be acceptable to you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christopher Irvine





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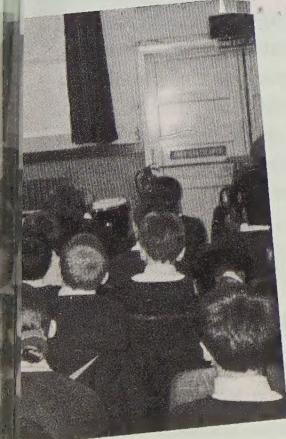
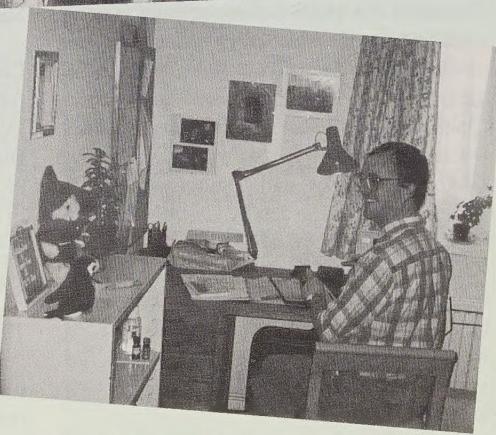
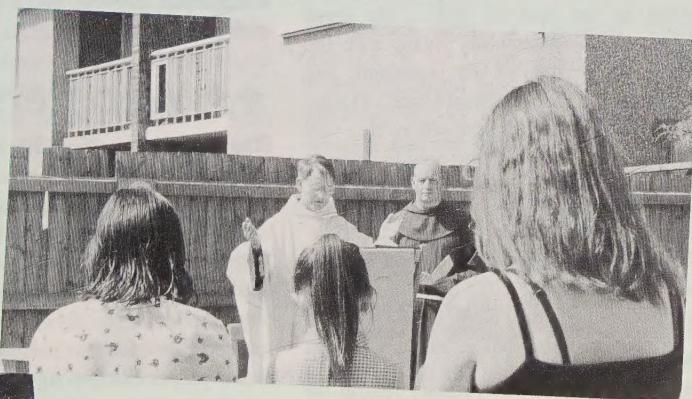
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Community Routes



◆◆ Philip Goodrich TSSF, RIP

Brother Damian writes:

Bishop Philip Goodrich died unexpectedly on 22 January at the age of seventy-one. From 1990 to 1996, he had been the Bishop Protector of the three Orders in the European Province of SSF and, latterly, as Protector General of the whole Society of Saint Francis worldwide. He was halfway through his novitiate as a Franciscan Tertiary when he died. Bishop Philip not only served the Church with devotion and enthusiasm but his whole ministry was clearly marked with what I would humbly call Franciscan traits. Though living at Hartlebury Castle, the grand home of the Bishops of Worcester since the year 857, he and Margaret would be glad to entertain in their kitchen if the occasion could be interpreted as an extended family one, or would draw up easy chairs by the open fire away from the office desk if the discussion were purely pastoral.

Ministers, and others of course, have the need from time to time to share their concerns with the Bishop Protector, whose rôle has been described as 'protecting SSF from the Church and the Church from SSF.' After one such encounter, where I had expressed a concern to show some extra care for those brothers who had come from abroad and were living now in our Province, Bishop Philip immediately suggested 'Hartlebury Days', offering the facilities of his home as a place to meet and talk through any difficulties or tensions. Of course everyone enjoyed the privilege and it helped us greatly to relax with our agenda.

In 1993, on the retirement of Bishop Ken Mason, Bishop Philip was elected Protector General, a responsibility that offered, in practical terms, little more than an imposing title! However, he was eager to enquire whether he should visit SSF across the world, and was relieved to hear that such was not our expectation. It expressed, however, his willingness to give himself fully, to make himself available where needed and always to be ready to offer that thoughtful and balanced advice, grounded in an incarnational theology which so often marked his deeply human Christian response. He may have died a junior 'member' of SSF, as a Tertiary novice, but he had already given generously to us of the best of Christian qualities as a Father-in-God expressing Francis's love, humility and joy every time he had occasion to meet with any of us. Thank you brother Philip, and Margaret, for all you have given to us. Respectfully, we pray that he may rest in peace; but his own words would have sounded more like, 'Alleluia, On we go!'

◆◆ Past future

Anselm spent six 'blissful' weeks at Saint Deiniol's Residential Library, Hawarden as the first part of his sabbatical. He spent the time studying early precursors of *franciscan* magazine: the *Flowerette* newsletters, printed at Batcombe (now Hilfield). He was thus living in the past with the Brotherhood of Saint Francis of Assisi in the 1920s and 1930s – living in the past of SSF. He spent Christmas at Glasshampton, living with the future, in the persons of our postulants, and looks forward to living at Saint Clare's House, Birmingham. He is not sure where that will be, as the whereabouts of the new location is in the hands of the local housing department!

◆◆ End of an era

The Candlemas Chapter of CSF decided with deep regret to close the house at **Newcastle-under-Lyme**, from 31 July 2001, after twenty-seven years. The primary reason for the closure is that community staffing needs cannot be met from present resources. However, the Chapter also decided that Sister **Teresa** would remain in the area to continue her considerable ministry in the diocese and beyond.

Greystones Saint Francis will be sold. It is the hope of the community that another Religious community might be interested in buying it and details have been circulated to the leaders of both Anglican and Roman Catholic communities.

Sister **Joyce**, the CSF Minister Provincial, said: 'We ask for prayers as we prepare to close the house, which is always a difficult

time for us as well as for those who will feel our absence as a praying presence in their midst. In all this, we give thanks for all we have received in our time here and cannot but be immensely grateful to the late Miss Clare Heath who made it all possible.'

And Brother Damian writes:

After twenty years of an SSF presence in **Holy Trinity House, Paddington**, the former vicarage of Holy Trinity Church, the lease on the property from the Diocese of London expired at the beginning of this year. Due to financial stringencies, the Diocese felt unable to renew the lease. Thus SSF no longer maintain the Friary there. The four brothers previously resident are now temporarily dispersed and are living and working in different parts of London.

◆◆ Compton Creativity

Helen Julian's first book *Living the Gospel: the spirituality of St Francis and St Clare* will be published in June of this year by Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), at £5.99.

Beverley features in one of a set of educational videos entitled *Arguments for the Existence of God*. In an interview filmed at Compton Durville, she talks about the rôle of religious experience in her life. The set of five videos, plus a resource CD, is available from Dialogue Educational Videos, PO Box 86, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 2XJ, price £150, plus £7.50 p & p.

◆◆ Websters SSF

The **Franciscan Website** has been up and running for three years and, as a serendipitous boost at a meeting of Religious Communities recently, the speaker used our Website to illustrate how good a website could be! If you have yet to sample its delights, know that it contains all of this magazine and its predecessors for the previous six years, the latest prayer list and up-to-date whereabouts of the brothers and sisters, 'hyperlinks' to Third Order and Companions pages and wider Franciscan links, the SSF Brochure and much, much more. If you don't have access to a computer, then try your local library. Our address is: www.orders.anglican.org/ssf/

◆◆ Preaching Vocations

15 July this year, in the Anglican Provinces of Canterbury and York at least, is **Vocations Sunday**. If your parish is within reach of one of our houses, why not invite a brother or sister to preach or speak about the religious

vocation on that day? The C/SSF Vocations Team is running a day, *Exploring Franciscan Life*; for those aged twenty-one to forty, in London on 23 June. Further details can be had from **Christine James** at Compton Durville.

◆◆ Francis the prophet

At a day conference at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury, on 16 June next, the third and final volume of the *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, subtitled *The Prophet*, will be launched. The first two volumes were subtitled, respectively, *The Saint* and *The Founder*.

The speakers will be the co-editors of the book, **Regis Armstrong OFM Cap.**, **J A Wayne Hellmann OFM Conv.** and **William J Short OFM**. For details and costs of the day conference, contact the FISC website: www.franciscans.ac.uk/

All three volumes are obtainable from Hilfield Friary Bookshop.

◆◆ A Right Stewardship

Brother Christopher writes:

For the first time in eight years, all of the First and Second Order Bursars met together in the Old Parsonage, Freeland for the **Bursars Conference**. It was quite a squeeze to get us all in, since there were eighteen of us.

Jonathan and **Elizabeth** steered the meeting with help from other bursars. Elizabeth confirmed the importance of a trusting, non-judgmental attitude as Bursar. **Joyce** and **Damian** were both present at different times. Damian spoke to us of the legal requirement for transparent accounting that lets others know exactly how house accounts are managed at any point in time.

Jeremy Kirk, the insurance broker for SSF, kindly gave up his Saturday morning to discuss our Insurance Policies and the potentially-thorny issue of Public Liability.

Christine James encouraged us to make regular, straightforward reports of the house accounts to members of the house. It is not solely the bursars who are accountable for the money of the house and such feedback enables all sisters and brothers to be responsible for the income, spending, and savings of the community.

Hilary addressed the issue of *Gift Aid* and the Inland Revenue. The new scheme for reclaiming tax on charitable giving replaces the former covenants system. There is now no legal minimum limit to a donation and any form of donation (though not subscription) by one person is covered by the new scheme.

We were put through our paces with an on-the-spot Petty Cash exercise. **Robert Coombes** highlighted the joys and pitfalls of trying to get the petty cash to balance. Another exercise dealt with reconciling monthly bank statements. **Moyra** led us through the process of how to compile the

end-of-year house budget report.

Anselm presided efficiently over a packed dining room and gave us full opportunity to clean up any mess we might have made on the Old Parsonage carpet. There was also time to visit the *Oxfordshire Yeoman*, but did anyone get receipts?

◆◆ Youth Camp 25

For the past twenty-five years, Hilfield Youth Camp has been providing a unique experience of Christian community to young people aged between fourteen and twenty-five. Anyone who has attended the camps in any capacity in the past is warmly invited to come to Hilfield for our twenty-fifth birthday party on Saturday 18 August, to begin with the eucharist at noon, at which Philip Bartholomew will preside. The same day will also see the official launch of the long-awaited *Friends of Hilfield Youth Camp*; it is hoped that this will provide a focus of prayerful, practical and financial support for the present camp, as well as providing continuity for former campers.

We know from the feedback we get that HYC makes a significant difference to a great number of people (not least the many brothers and sisters who have put so much into it over the years!). The camp has, inevitably, changed in many ways since its original inception. However, now – as twenty-five years ago – we hold to our original aim; to provide young people with an opportunity to explore their faith in a framework of Franciscan spirituality, not just for ten days in August but throughout their lives.

◆◆ Go, repair my Church ...

Nathanael began a two-year extended mission to a small town in Anglesey: Llanerch-y-medd in the autumn of last year. His brief was to help the Diocese to decide whether the old parish church, closed after falling into disrepair, might be renovated and re-opened for public worship.

The combination of Nathanael's systematic pastoral visits and an incident of a falling stone from the Church structure in front of a passer-by has resulted in the decision to repair and re-open the Church for the local people with immediate effect!

◆◆ Round up

Christine Julian OSC expects to make her profession in life vows at Freeland on 20 April; **Beverley** has also been elected to life profession: she hopes to make her vows on 11 May at Compton Durville.

On 25 January at Glasshampton, the following were admitted as novices: Mark Burrows, taking the name **Mark Edmund**; Richard Adamberry, taking the name **Richard**, and Colin Penman, taking the name **Dominic**. The following have been elected as Guardian of their Friary: **Alan Michael** at Birmingham; **Angelo** at Gladstone Park; **Amos** at

Barrowfield; **Benedict** at Glasshampton; **Martin** has at Cambridge; **Paschal** at Alnmouth; **Philip Bartholomew** at Hilfield. **Samuel** was instituted as Vicar of Saint Bene't's Cambridge on 9 March by Bishop Anthony of Ely.

Anselm has moved to Saint Clare's House Birmingham; **Christine James** moves to Brixton in May; **Hugh** has been transferred to the European Province and is now resident at Hilfield; **Patricia Clare** has moved from Abergavenny to another hermitage near Tregaron; **Rose** moved to San Francisco at the end of March, initially for six months.

John Francis has been granted *Leave of Absence*; **David Alban** has withdrawn from the novitiate; **David** and **Matthew** have been released from their profession in First Vows. f

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Continued from page 5

out, in fear and trembling, what it means to live out a faith-based morality that draws on and learns from the story of Jesus. So what would be the implications of such a theological ethic for the debate on human sexuality within the Christian community?

Firstly, a theology of sexuality based upon responsibility and faithfulness would not, as some might suggest, lead to a value-free hedonism. Nothing could be further from the truth, for nothing could be more unfaithful to the call we have received as the Church – the call to be faithful to the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ – than a system that sought only personal gratification, power or domination.

Secondly, being faithful to the character of God requires that we be prepared to meet with the stranger, the ones who are different, the ones who are ‘outside’, and enter into dialogue and fellowship with them. It has been suggested ‘that Church discussion on sexual ethics is in danger of being taken over by the campaigners’ and ‘that the campaigners are not listening to one another but speaking past each other, so that we often seem far away from a community of discourse.’ Approaching our discussion with the question ‘How can I be faithful in this discussion to the theological virtues of faith, hope and love?’ in mind rather than the question ‘What am I prepared to allow?’ should lead to a more open and constructive dialogue for all concerned.

Finally, asking the question ‘Where is faithfulness happening?’ rather than ‘Is this allowed?’ may enable the Church to develop a new theology of sex and sexuality. A theology that could lead us out of the confrontation and polarisation currently experienced, into a new and dynamic if somewhat uncomfortable and insecure era in which we seek to explore what ‘being faithful to the Jesus story’ really means. An era in which we recognise and value the mystery of human sexuality for what it is – a gift of God to be enjoyed rather than something for the Church to use as a means of marginalisation, repression or control. *f*



The Reverend Ian Thompson is Dean of Chapel at Selwyn College, Cambridge.

franciscan database

Many people ask what details we hold about them on our address list and what the odd letters and numbers mean at the top of their address label (and also see the new box headed Data Protection on page 2). Be assured: we only keep your name and address and whatever other information you have chosen to share with us, such as telephone numbers. We do not keep any personal information. We are registered under the Data Protection Act, though we don't actually need to be because of the minimal information stored. We don't share these details with anyone outside SSF; however, those listed as Companions might sometimes be contacted to see if they would like to attend a Third Order Meeting in their area, for example, or to receive Companions, a bi-annual magazine, produced independently by a group of Companions (& thus posted separately from franciscan).

So the information is used strictly for SSF matters only. Any leaflets or other insertions are put there by ourselves at Hilfield, when we do the mailing. I hope this reassures you.

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Act now to prevent trauma and melancholy setting in: send off your subscription and experience the relief. If you think any of your details are wrongly recorded, do please write and I will endeavour to correct the matter.

Tristam SSF

Editor and Subscriptions' Secretary

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Anglican Communion: www.anglicancommunion.org/

Book Reviews

Inger Hermann
Born into Violence
 ISBN 0-334-02817-5
 SCM Press, London, £11.95

Frau Hermann here recounts her experiences as an RE teacher of deprived children in three special schools in Stuttgart, and reflects on them.

SCM Press makes her book available for English readers, in John Bowden's translation. The children she describes in this compelling, compassionate book are many of them refugees from places of conflict who have witnessed violence, often to their parents, and lost everything which tells them that they are lovable and loved.

'Their fates, their laments, their accusations against life express the deepest human longing for God. Can I make them feel that this longing for wholeness is at the same time a reflection of God's longing for people? Not only do we seek God, for example in RE, but he also seeks us – for example in RE.'

The children we meet in these pages are very convincing evidence for the truth of those assertions.

This is a book certainly for teachers of RE (of children, for that matter) – for all who are willing to take into their hearts the plight of these children in the shadows – for human beings.

Anselm SSF

Common Praise

ISBN 1-85311-264-X (full music) £19.99
 1-85311-265-8 (melody) £11.99
 1-85311-266-6 (hardback, words only) £8.99
 1-85311-267-4 (limp, words only) £6.99

Canterbury Press Norwich, 2000

Here is a new hymn book. When we saw it several of us said: 'Not another!'

We are spoilt for hymn books. The last fifty years or so have produced an incredible number of new hymns and hymnals, happily so in view of changing needs. Yet already by the end of the nineteenth century there were said to be two hundred hymn books in use in the Church of England. Brothers who were at Hilfield when Father Algy was Guardian will remember the large collection of hymnals which he kept in his room. In chapel we used only the *English Hymnal*, supplemented by various printed sheets, but Algy had us sing tunes from a variety of unexpected sources. Now (in addition to *Hymns for Prayer and Praise* for the daily office hymns) we have at least six books in regular use. One book which would cover most of our needs would be a godsend. *Common Praise* is as near to the answer as anything I've seen.

While it is described as 'a new edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*', *Common Praise* is not for Anglicans only. It is, however, as the index of 'Hymns for Sunday Themes' suggests, geared to *Common Worship*. The editors have sought to 'gather up the finest hymns, old and new, and present them for use as material for worship in the twenty first century.' The term 'hymn' is widely interpreted and a number of worship

songs and carols have been included.

Each of us has his or her own idea of what the ideal hymnal should contain. If the book is not to be too big for handling we shall regret the omission of some of our favourites. Beauty is in the eye of each beholder and I wondered if I'd find in *Common Praise* items I hoped I'd never hear again. I did, but very few of them. Of this collection of over six hundred hymns for seasonal and general use it can be said, with regard to words and music, that by and large the finest material has been selected.

Common Praise is clearly printed and presented in a scholarly way. No alterations have been made to the texts without good reason and period pieces have not been torn from their moorings to avoid the 'thou/thee' idiom. Helpful notes on the music are provided and the book is well indexed. The 'Index of Scriptural References' will be particularly useful to those who want to find hymns to relate to the readings.

I welcome and commend this book.

Reginald SSF

John Vincent
Hope from the City
 ISBN 0-7162-0533-5

Epworth Press, Leicester, 2000, £8.95

John Vincent is a Methodist Minister who for the last thirty years has been working with Sheffield Inner City Ecumenical Mission, and with the Urban Theology Unit. He was President of the Methodist Conference from 1989 to 1990.

SICEM has ten projects, if the UTU is included, and the reader is offered the history of these very various enterprises, and a description of the labours of those who work in them. If the scale of the inner city opportunity described in the *Faith in the City* report of 1985 is born in mind, this study will be seen as very much 'seeds in the city' – the mustard seeds of the Gospel, the smallest of

all the seeds, but the title *Hope from the City* is indicative of the spirit which permeates the book.

'I believe that there is new hope for Christianity itself in Britain, through the discoveries and experiences of Christians like those described in this book ... There is hope for the future of Christianity if it becomes again a radical alternative of costly and relevant discipleship, lived out in love and faith wherever there is human need. The little communities and people of the inner cities are signs of hope for all.'

SICEM incorporates members of Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches – and the UTU has Roman Catholic and Anglican involvement – an example of not doing separately what we can do together?

Anselm SSF

Andrew Burnham (compiler)

A Manual of Anglo-Catholic Devotion

ISBN 1-85311-354-9

Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2000, £18.99

The title of this book may sound somewhat old-fashioned and partisan. But it is simply shorthand for stating that it is intended for members of the Church of England, and especially for those who value the Catholic tradition. It is in fact absolutely up-to-date, and it is indeed a worthy companion to *Common Worship*.

In former days there was a plethora of devotional books, e.g. *Saint Swithun's Prayer Book* and a whole range of confirmation manuals. People were encouraged to bring them to Church and to make extensive use of the prayers during the quiet moments of the Eucharist. This book stands in the same tradition, though it is less likely to be a companion to Church because it weighs 900 grams (2 lbs).

George Guiver CR in his book *Company of Voices* shows that the primers in medieval times and the devotional books of the post Reformation era drew heavily upon the liturgical material, and that people were taught to pray under the shadow of the liturgy in their own personal prayers. *A Manual of Anglo-Catholic Devotion* makes similar provision, but in contemporary form.

Many people are looking for daily Offices which are shorter than those celebrated in Church. This book provides such forms. We are given morning and evening prayers based on the monastic Offices of Lauds and Vespers, drawing upon material from *Celebrating Common Prayer* and the *Divine Office* of the Roman Catholic Church. The lectionary is that of the *Weekday Missal*, together with provision from the *Revised Common Lectionary* for Sundays and festivals. Two forms of the traditional Stations of the Cross are given, and also prayers to accompany the Rosary, illustrated by the line drawings of Martin Travers.

The section entitled 'The Mass' consists of Order 1 from *Common Worship*, given in both contemporary and traditional language, together with prayers for use when entering the Church and also before departing. There is a very helpful section on Reconciliation and the use of sacramental confession.

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The table of moveable feasts takes us up to 2025. This may sound optimistic, partly because the official liturgy of the Church of England will perhaps change before that date, and a new edition may be called for. But in the meanwhile, this book is a real treasure, and it is set to enrich the prayer life of countless Anglicans. We should be grateful to the compiler, who is now Bishop of Ebbsfleet.

Martin SSF

Alan Wilkinson

Christian Socialism:

Scott Holland to Tony Blair

ISBN 0-334-02749-7

SCM Press, London, 1998, £14.95

'In the interminable case of *Dubb v. Superior persons and Co.*, whether Christians, capitalists or Communists, I am an unrepentant Dubbite.'

(R H Tawney)

This is a fascinating book for its insights into the lives and priorities of the laity and clergymen it reports and seeks to dissect; equally, it is infuriatingly frustrating for its lack of explicit intellectual structure, clarity and coherence. Headlam, Gore, Temple, Conrad, Hewlett Johnson all feature, and some less familiar – Jenkinson, Hopkins, Adderley, Groser, Ecclestone. Anecdotes and fuller accounts of the use of clergy positions to pursue socialist goals inside and outside the ecclesiastical and political establishment make for enthralling reading by anyone committed to the Labour movement.

But there is no sense of the Labour movement, let alone a Labour movement which, with all its faults, considers itself the legitimate source of socialist values. Nor is there any serious, sustained engagement with the contradictions of Christianity and socialism or their value congruence; repeated passing reference to the problems of reconciling Christian hope and materialist expectation is no substitute for proper analysis. Perhaps Wilkinson had some other clear thesis to explore but it is never clear. It cannot even be said that Wilkinson successfully and evenly covers the major socialist figures in the Churches and Christians in socialist politics. Long early chapters are devoted to Scott Holland, Gore and Temple, about whom much has already been written, whilst later chapters rarely rise above the broadsheet journalism in their account of a myriad of post-war politicians and Churchmen, none studied closely and in depth.

If a theme can be deduced, interesting to explore systematically, it is the gap between the lives of most bourgeois, socialist clergy and the working classes for whom they presume to prescribe (with the honourable exceptions of the cursorily covered parish clergy of this century). Of the major figures, only the layman, Tawney, seems to have been able to move with ease (and self-conscious effort) between his class of origin and the class whose cause he espoused. Even then, as Tawney would have been the first to admit, how others see us is as important as how we

see ourselves. Tawney refused a commission and served as a sergeant in the First World War; visited by his fellow socialist, Gore, when he was recovering from battle wounds in an army hospital, Tawney heard Gore advise the hospital matron that she had 'one of the most valuable lives in England under her care ... (Later), the matron hastened to Tawney's bedside and upbraided him, "Why ever didn't you tell us you were a gentleman?"'

Equally, a proper examination of the differing mutualities of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Dissenters and Labour activists in this century could have been rewarding. As it is, Christian Socialism seems to be almost exclusively identified, without justification, with Anglicans (clergy in particular). There is only passing perfunctory and confused reference to the transition of the Papal thinking from solidarity with other Italian landlords to identification with Christian democracy and some recognition of Latin American liberation theology. Coverage of Dissent is remarkably dismissive, given the strong correlation between the weakening of the non-conformist link with the Liberal party and the growth of a Labour movement which partly modelled its organisational and campaigning practice on non-conformity.

By the end of Wilkinson's book, we are no clearer where he stands on the major tensions between Christianity and socialism, nor greatly enlightened as to the similarities and differences between contemporary Christian political activists and their predecessors. The newcomer to Christian socialist themes will, however, be much clearer about the richness of socialist Christian experience in England in the last hundred-and-fifty years and the continuing, lively struggle to reconcile the option for the poor and practical political commitment. The bibliography is temptingly extensive, the scholarship genuine. For all its faults, the book trumpets a moving witness to Christ in the world.

Keith Fenwick

Michael Doe

Seeking the Truth in Love

The Church and Homosexuality

ISBN 0-232-52399-1

DLT, London, 2000, £5.95

This is an excellent little book and the first in many years about this subject that I would thoroughly recommend to parishes and individuals who are trying to make some sense of the Church and homosexuality. Bishop Doe begins with the experience of the last Lambeth Conference where this issue came to be so divisive and painful. He was a member of the sub-group examining this question. However, unlike Lambeth, he manages to open up the discussion so that a wide range of opinions can be included within the dialogue. This is a good summary book, with well-chosen quotes from many of the key recent texts on this issue.

It is clear that he is coming from a fairly liberal stance but he cites, frequently and fairly, arguments from much more conservative Christians. Each chapter is very readable and concludes with a summary and often questions which could be taken up by a

study group. He acknowledges that, on the whole, he is dealing with male homosexuality and so arguments about lesbianism and bisexuality are not properly addressed.

He attempts to locate the discussion firmly within an Anglican framework, emphasising the need for the interpretation of scripture, and a critical stance towards tradition, reason and experience. He is clear of the central importance of heterosexual marriage for Christians but recognises that, just because something is the norm, other patterns may not also have value. He recognises with honesty that homosexuals are part of the human community and so part of the Church and well represented within the ranks of the clergy. I think that he is right to say that 'the real issue is about the nature of the Church – whether we are an inclusive or an exclusive community – and about the nature of God.' Maybe most importantly of all, the book always reads as if he is talking about human beings not just problems that the Church has to solve.

David Monteith

Associate Vicar of Saint Martin-in-the-Fields

Michael Taylor

Poverty and Christianity -
Reflections at the Interface between Faith
and Experience

Bernard Gilpin Pastoral Theology Lectures
for 2000, University of Durham

ISBN 0-334-02814-0

SCM Press, London, 2000, £10.95

For twelve years Michael Taylor was Director of Christian Aid and so was subjected to a variety of, for him, traumatic examples of the human suffering in which the poor are caught up, to the extent that, for them, a life which has to be endured, rather than enjoyed, is 'normal'.

For Taylor, the trauma extended to and questioned his Christian faith. He says, 'My experience of famine in the Horn of Africa led me to re-examine my belief in a loving and powerful God. My experience of disastrous floods in Bangladesh led to doubts about the impact of Christianity and its claim to be redemptive and creative.' Christians who inform themselves about the state of the real world, and do not hide from it, must share those doubts.

This book is no quick fix. Taylor has the courage to face facts, and invites readers to do the same. In spite of the efforts of John Hick, Frances Young, WH Vanstone to provide one, he concludes that there can be no rational explanation for the 'normality of suffering' in God's world. Further, the apparent failure of Christianity to bring healing and redemption to a world such as ours is tackled – again, no easy answers – but, equally, no capitulation; rather an insistence that Christian doctrine does have a useful contribution to make to the formulation of development policies. Taylor has 'a personal bias in favour of theological work which promotes historical change in favour of the poor.'

His final sentence: 'Hope makes the hills green and it believes that all things can be made new.' So, here is a book for the thoughtful reader, for whom development issues represent a challenge to Christian belief.

Anselm SSF

Angela of Foligno
Selected & Modernised by Margaret Gallyon
The Visions, Revelations and Teachings
of Angela of Foligno
a member of the Third Order of St Francis
 ISBN 1-898595-33-X
Alpha Press, Brighton, 2000, £12.95

In *Poverty and Joy*, William Short says that Angela of Foligno was considered a *teacher of theologians* although she was not herself a theologian in academic terms. This was because of her ability to express vividly her experience of God. He goes on to suggest that her awareness of a world so filled with God may have its corollary in the later theories of Scotus about the incarnation, and he also quotes Bonaventure on the way in which every creature speaks of God and so is a word of God. Evelyn Underhill suggested that Angela's influence was more far-reaching and enduring than that of any other Franciscan, except Bonaventure himself, who lived during the century after the death of Francis. There is a resurgence of interest in women mystics today, and happily this extends to Angela. This is a simplified selection from a translation of 1909. It has been modernised and put into an approachable first-person form which makes it much more accessible. It seems to me to be an admirably readable version which will be a useful introduction to Angela. If anyone wishes to go further, there is the edition of her *Complete Works* by Paul Lachance in the *Classics of Western Spirituality* series, but this is certainly a good way into knowing and appreciating her and may enable her to take the place which she deserves.

Gillian Clare OSC

Trevor Beeson
Rebels and Reformers
Christian Renewal in the 20th Century
 ISBN 0-334-02792-6
SCM Press, London, 1999, £12.99
 &
 Deborah Padfield (editor)
Hidden Lives
Stories from the East End
by the people of 42 Balaam Street
 ISBN 4-900259-04-4

Eastside Community Heritage, London,
1999, £7 (inc. p&p from publisher at
Old Town Hall, 29 Broadway, E5 4BQ)

I enjoyed reading, with some nostalgia, a couple of pages each day of Trevor Beeson's book. Familiar figures, like Martin Luther King, Trevor Huddleston and David Jenkins, are well described and others, only vaguely known to me, introduced. The author describes these twentieth-century figures as 'Christians seized by the life and teaching of Jesus and, in the power of the Spirit, challenging the set ways of the religious institutions, or the inhumanity of unjust social orders.'

Whether these hundred-and-five, well-written stories will stir our complacency or change our direction remains to be seen. Certainly, they will remind us of how things have changed in the last hundred years and perhaps inspire us to work for the future goals.

By contrast, I found the vivid stories written

by twenty little-known east London people compulsive reading. Many Franciscans know this part of London: we have been there since the end of the last century, SSF taking over 42 Balaam Street from the Society of the Divine Compassion in the 1950s. Today, the house is used by 'Helping Hands', where local people offer practical help to local people and where diverse individuals make a residential community. The Franciscan aim has been 'to become part of the locality and to draw the locality into the life of prayer and fraternity.' Today's setup, much to the credit of Brother Julian, is the modern adaptation.

In the setting of excellent photographs, and a succinct history of the area, Deborah Padfield has succeeded in editing the stories without losing their vivid and moving appeal. Some of the writers are, in part, victims of the environment those in the other book attempted to change. But I am sure readers will agree with Rowan Williams, who writes: 'No generalities, bureaucratic or theological, will really help you understand it. You have to look and listen. I want to say, above all, thank you for the chance to do just that. It is a wonderful collection of faces and voices.'

Bernard SSF

Patrick Woodhouse
Beyond Words
An introduction, guide and resource for a contemplative way of prayer
 ISBN 4-84003-694-5
Kevin Mayhew, London, 2001, £8.99
 &
 Jeremy Harvey
Marian Dunlop, Teacher and Healer
Her life glimpsed
 ISBN 0-9524424-4-2
George Mann (Internet), 2000, £8.50

Beyond Words is an attractive book, by a friend of SSF, now precentor of Wells Cathedral. Worked out with the parishioners of his previous parish, it is essentially practical: challenging material about the 'how' and two, A5 pages a week as food for focus. The Sunday Gospel keeps it 'Church connected' but the style of prayer is after John Main, fed from Eastern and Western traditions.

Many Christians over the ages began their prayers from Scripture in a way that became *lectio divina* in the monastic tradition, moving through reading, meditation and prayer into (hopefully) contemplation. But there is the other tradition: seeking contemplation by stilling, centring, gently returning to a focussing word – the Name of Jesus, an attribute of God, a psalm verse, or other mantra – whenever thoughts crowd in to distract. This book skillfully leaves room for both approaches, though the author clearly prefers the latter. It is a great book to get people started.

Another long-term friend of SSF (he's dedicated the book to Brother Hubert) is the chairman of the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer, which Marian Dunlop, the subject of the book, founded in 1932. The Fellowship sends mantras (usually a biblical verse, one for daily use each week) to members once a month, thus bonding them together in the

Body of Christ. Marian was in many ways a pioneer, whose approach in 1920 England was unfamiliar. She had moved through Girton College Cambridge, to school teaching, to her own 'home school', into the Guild of Health and then the Fellowship. Her single-mindedness reminds me of our late Sister Leonore. Rowan Williams, in his Foreword to this 'excellent memoir', highlights the teaching and nurturing elements, not only as a corrective to some contemporary educational methods but also for its perspective urgently needed by our contemporary Church. He affirms contemplative prayer as 'a means to get behind our ideas to educate our feelings, especially the negative ones.' Jeremy takes us into this method, especially in chapter six, where he reviews Marian's writings (many of them available from the Fellowship at 8 Prince of Wales Road, Dorchester DT1 1PW). What was a lonely pilgrimage on the fringe of organised religion has today been increasingly recognised as an integral part of the tradition, likely to appeal in our new millennium.

Bernard SSF

Laurence Freeman
Jesus the Teacher Within
 ISBN 0-8264-1223-8
Continuum, London, 2000, £14.99

On the last of three days of discussion on the Gospels in the 1994 John Main seminar 'The Good Heart', the Dalai Lama turned to a surprised Christian beside him and asked, simply, what the Resurrection meant. *Jesus the Teacher Within* is a personal response to this question by Laurence Freeman, Benedictine monk and director of the World Community of Christian Meditation.

In fact, Freeman describes how the language of truth begins by asking the right questions. In the Gospels Jesus asks his disciples 'Who do you say that I am?' In this book we are urged that 'to know him more we must know the truth of ourselves.'

A tall order perhaps? Here we have a carefully laid out collection of landmarks for those who are provoked by Jesus' question. The merits of reading the Gospels, praying, being part of a community of believers, subscribing to the Kingdom of forgiveness, and grappling with the fear of the ego, are all mulled over, interspersed by frequent parables from the remote, craggy Bere Island, off the coast of County Cork, from where some of the Freeman clan originated.

The book has the feel of an apologetic written for a post-Christian world. But, as someone living within organised religion, I appreciated his clear insight into the often taken-for-granted *status quo*, for example the chapter on the Church. It helps to see, printed in black and white, that 'the Church is, in the end, not the Kingdom. That is the Church's humility.' There is more helpful theology on Christ as the humility of God, 'whose mission is to make humanity better able to communicate.'

If this book were a T-shirt it would read 'Jesus is the Question'.

Christopher SSF